

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 000688

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/27/2014

TAGS: PREL KPAL IS JO KTER

SUBJECT: JORDANIANS NOTE THAT STATE OF THE UNION SPEECH
DOES NOT ADDRESS MEPP

REF: AMMAN 629

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires David Hale for Reasons 1.5 (b), (d)

¶1. (U) President Bush's state of the union address has received substantial coverage in all major dailies. While many of these reports were mostly factual in nature, several prominent articles highlighted the absence of references to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, as well as the Democrats' criticism of the speech. The day following the address, one Arabic daily, for example, included a front-page title line stating, "U.S. President ignores the Palestinian issue in his state of the union address," while another daily's front-page report read, "The Democrats and the American press criticize Bush's state of the union address."

¶2. (C) Outside of the media, there was little public reaction to the President's speech. When PolCouns asked vocal MP MAMDOUH AL-ABBADI (East Banker, Amman-3rd District) for his view on the address, he opined that President Bush's failure to mention the Israeli-Palestinian conflict did not bode well for the peace process. He jokingly expressed relief, however, that the President had not named any new "evil" countries for a possible future U.S. invasion.

¶3. (C) Similarly, the head of the International Relations Committee in the Jordanian Senate, FAWWAZ ABUL GHANAM, expressed disappointment to PolCouns that President Bush had not mentioned the Palestinian issue, asserting that this proves the U.S. has walked away from the peace process. DR. DURIED MAHASNEH, a former government official who helped negotiate Jordan's peace treaty with Israel, told PolOff that he was disheartened by the speech's exclusion of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and opined that President Bush was not going to apply any pressure upon Israel to implement its roadmap obligations during a U.S. election year.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: The lack of public evidence of forward movement in the peace process, combined with the absence of any mention of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in President Bush's state of the union address, has left many Jordanians wondering whether the U.S. is truly committed to implementation of the roadmap. The return of JOHN WOLF to the region and renewed U.S. diplomatic engagement could help counter these doubts. End Comment.

Visit Embassy Amman's classified web site at
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/amman> or access the site through the State Department's SIPRNET home page.

HALE